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Access to X-way changed character of community

By Laurie Croal
For The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — In 1963, the Duxbury exit on Route 3 was opened and the commuter rush was on. Duxbury would never be the same again.

Once the highway had been extended through town, Edward Dondero, former town administrator and a lifelong resident, announced that "Duxbury was no longer the best kept secret on the South Shore."

The population explosion that followed proved him right.

In 1955, Duxbury was a small, sleepy town with a population of 4,280.

Most residents worked in nearby communities, but few made the long trek into Boston. By 1960 the town had only grown by 10 percent.

But during the next five years, the town's population would increase by 31 percent and by 1970 it had almost doubled. From 1960 to today, it has almost quadrupled.

"Duxbury became very much a Boston bedroom community during

that period," said former Selectman John Leonard. "There's no question that the expressway was a factor in the growth in that period."

The southernmost town in the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area, Duxbury is 40 miles from the city.

Although train service was available from Scituate to Boston until the 1950s, there had been no easy straight route into the city until the expressway was built. Today more than 50,000 cars pass the Duxbury exit each day.

Town officials began reviewing plans for the highway in 1952, but it would take 10 years for construction to begin in the area.

"Work actually started within the town in 1962, and it was opened one year later, exerting the greatest influence on our changing environment, and coinciding with our most rapid period of growth," Leonard has written.

Planning board Chairman Sara Wilson agreed that it was Route 3

that opened up Duxbury to commuters.

"It had started earlier with brave souls that did not mind driving the long haul, but when the road opened up, there was an enormous effect on Duxbury," Wilson said.

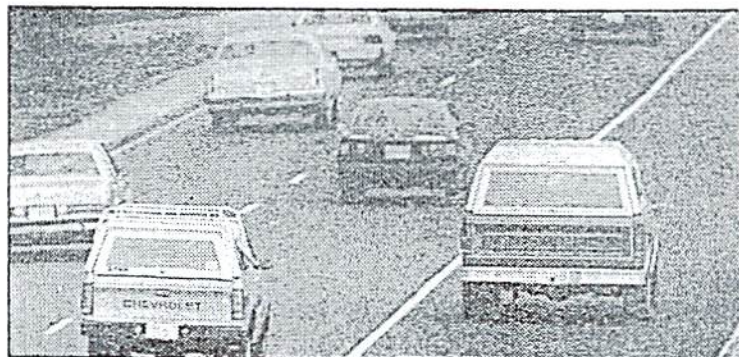
Even without Route 3, Duxbury would have continued to grow.

"It would be smaller," Wilson said. "It wouldn't have grown as fast, but it certainly would have grown. There would have been less people that were willing to take the long haul to Boston."

Wilson believes that without Route 3 most Duxbury residents would probably be driving to jobs in Brockton, Braintree or Quincy, instead of Boston.

Despite the massive growth that followed the opening of Route 3, many residents say it has not adversely affected the quality of life in town.

Instead, they say it may have improved it.



File photo

Route 3 helped change Duxbury from a sleepy farm town to a suburb.

Fire Chief Carl O'Neill, a lifetime resident of Duxbury, said that in the past 20 years the schools and other town services have been improved. Good zoning laws and a strong planning board prevented the worst from happening, he said.

And residents say the long commute into Boston, which can take

anywhere from a little more than hour to more than two hours, is not that bad when kept in the right perspective.

"When I turn off the expressway and come into Duxbury, it's like I've entered a whole new world," said Frank Kemp of Washington Street. "It's worth it."